

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

Public Health Advisory

YELLOWKNIFE (August 19, 2011) –Dr. Lorne Clearsky, Chief Public Health Officer, is advising residents of the Northwest Territories of an increase in mercury levels in three lakes.

Thereby, a public health notice is in effect, recommending people limit the quantity of fish they eat from the following lakes:

- McGill Lake - Dehcho
- Deep Lake – Dehcho
- Fish Lake - Dehcho

Generally, fish is a good source of nutrition and high in protein, Vitamin B and omega-3 fatty acids. The health benefits of eating fish outweigh the potential risks. Mercury is a contaminant that can be found in fish. Levels of mercury differ from lake to lake and can be due to human activities or to natural causes.

Health Canada has established guidelines on what levels of mercury are acceptable to consume. To reduce exposure, it is recommended that people adhere to the following recommendations:

- Eat smaller fish
- Eat more fish that are lower in the food chain, such as whitefish or grayling and eat less that are higher in the food chain such as walleye, northern pike or lake trout

Based on Canada's Food Guide, one serving of fish is considered to be 75 grams, about the size of a deck of cards. Below are recommendations specific to each lake:

McGill Lake (Compared to 2000 levels, there has been no significant change in levels)

- Pike
 - Pike less than 43 cm in total length can be eaten without restriction
 - Pike greater than 74 cm should not be consumed
 - Pike between 43 and 74 cm should only be consumed twice a week, with serving sizes no larger than 75g, or the size of a deck of cards for non-pregnant or breast feeding mothers or children.
 - Pregnant or breastfeeding mothers should consume no more than 2 servings a month

- Children 5 to 11 should not consume more than 1 ½ serving per month
- Children under 4 should not consume more than 1 serving per month
- Walleye
 - Walleye less than 22 cm in total length can be eaten without restriction
 - Walleye greater than 38 cm should not be consumed
 - Walleye between 22 and 38 cm should only be consumed twice a week, with serving sizes no larger than 75g, or the size of a deck of cards for non-pregnant or breast feeding mothers or children.
 - Pregnant or breast feeding mothers should consume no more than 2 servings a month
 - Children 5 to 11 should not consume more than 1 ½ serving per month
 - Children under 4 should not consume more than 1 serving per month

Deep Lake - A small sample was collected for both species. Compared to 2000 levels, there has been no significant change in levels)

- Pike
 - Pike greater than 50 cm should not be consumed
 - Pike under 50 cm should only be consumed twice a week, with serving sizes no larger than 75g, or the size of a deck of cards for non-pregnant or breastfeeding mothers or children.
 - Pregnant or breastfeeding mothers should consume no more than 2 servings a month
 - Children 5 to 11 should not consume more than 1 ½ serving per month
 - Children under 4 should not consume more than 1 serving per month
- Walleye
 - Walleye greater than 37 cm should not be consumed
 - Walleye under 37 cm should only be consumed twice a week, with serving sizes no larger than 75g, or the size of a deck of cards for non-pregnant or breastfeeding mothers or children.
 - Pregnant or breast feeding mothers should consume no more than 2 servings a month
 - Children 5 to 11 should not consume more than 1 ½ serving per month
 - Children under 4 should not consume more than 1 serving per month

Fish Lake –

- Lake Trout
 - Due to small numbers of fish caught, retesting will be done, with avoidance of large fish for consumption
- Pike
 - Pike less than 57 cm in total length can be eaten without restriction
 - Pike greater than 107 cm should not be consumed
 - Pike between 57 and 107 cm should only be consumed twice a week, with serving sizes no larger than 75g, or the size of a deck of cards for non-pregnant or breast feeding mothers or children.
 - Pregnant or breast feeding mothers should consume no more than 2 servings a month
 - Children 5 to 11 should not consume more than 1 ½ serving per month
 - Children under 4 should not consume more than 1 serving per month
- Walleye
 - Walleye less than 47cm in total length can be eaten without restriction
 - Walleye greater than 47 cm should only be consumed twice a week, with serving sizes no larger than 75g, or the size of a deck of cards for non-pregnant or breast feeding mothers or children.
 - Pregnant or breastfeeding mothers should consume no more than 2 servings a month
 - Children 5 to 11 should not consume more than 1 ½ serving per month
 - Children under 4 should not consume more than 1 serving per month

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